

Message Text

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TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL ASMARA

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BONN

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SUBJECT:NOON BRIEFING RE ETHIOPIAN CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT

1. FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING
OF SEPTEMBER 12 ON ETHIOPIA.

Q. JOHN, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE DRAMATIC
CHANGES IN ETHIOPIA?

A. PROBABLY MORE THAN YOU WANT TO HEAR, BUT (LAUGHTER.)
BUT LET ME JUST TELL YOU THAT ACCORDING TO OUR EMBASSY,
THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY, INDEED, HAS DEPOSED EMPEROR HAILE
SELASSIE, THIS MORNING. THE ARMED FORCES COORDINATING
COMMITTEE, WHICH IS A GROUP OF ABOUT 70 TO 80 OFFICERS
AND ENLISTED MEN WHICH HAS CONTROLLED THE COUNTRY SINCE
JUNE, ANNOUNCED IN A BROADCAST THAT THE CROWN PRINCE,
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THE EMPEROR'S SON, ASFAW WOSSEN, WILL ASSUME THE THRONE--

THAT THE CONSTITUTION WAS SUSPENDED -- PARLIAMENT DIS-
SOLVED -- AND A PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS
ESTABLISHED TO RULE UNTIL A NEW CONSTITUTION CAN BE
PROMULGATED AND AN ELECTION HELD.

Q. HOW ABOUT THE QUESTION OF RECOGNITION?

A. WELL AT THIS MOMENT, THE QUESTION OF RECOGNITION
DOES NOT ARISE. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO

CONTINUE WORKING-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN
ADDIS ABABA.

THEN I CAN ONLY SAY THAT AS WE'VE ENJOYED GOOD
WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE EMPEROR'S GOVERNMENT,
WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUED RELATIONS ON A FRIENDLY
BASIS WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

Q. WOULD YOU REPEAT THAT AGAIN, A LITTLE MORE SLOWLY,
PLEASE? "AS WE ENJOY GOOD --"

A. "AS WE'VE ENJOYED GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE EMPEROR'S
GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST, WE WOULD HOPE AND EXPECT TO
CONTINUE THOSE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE NEW GOVERN-
MENT."

Q. DO YOU KNOW, JOHN, WHAT THE INTENT IS TO DO WITH
HAILE SELASSIE?

A. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. PERHAPS A PARDON? (LAUGHTER.)

Q. IS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT THE PRINCE, WHO IS
SOMEWHERE IN SWITZERLAND, WILL ACCEPT THIS "KIND"
GESTURE OF THE NEW RULERS, TO INVITE HIM AS A PUPPET?

A. THAT REALLY ISN'T FOR ME TO SAY, ENDRE. WE
KNOW HE IS IN SWITZERLAND. WHETHER HE ACCEPTS THE CALL
TO COME BACK TO BE THE MONARCH, I DON'T KNOW.
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Q. ARE THESE SEVENTY OR EIGHTY SOME PERSONS KNOWN TO
US? IS THEIR LEADERSHIP KNOWN TO US? DO WE HAVE ANY
READING ON WHAT KIND OF FELLOWS ARE TAKING OVER?

A. WELL I DON'T THINK IT WOULD BE REALLY
APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO CHARACTERIZE THE NEW REGIME. AS
I SAY, THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO CONTINUE

WORKING WITH IT.

I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE NAME OF THE PERSON IDENTIFIED FROM TIME TO TIME AS "CHAIRMAN" OF THE GROUP IS -- MENGHITSU HAILE MARIAM.

Q. DO YOU HAVE A RANK?

A. NO, BUT HE IS IN THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. HE'S A GENERAL, ISN'T HE? YOU DON'T KNOW?

A. I DON'T KNOW. NO.

Q. HOW MUCH ADVANCE WORD DID WE HAVE, JOHN, THAT THIS WAS TAKING PLACE, OR GOING TO TAKE PLACE?

A. WELL, "ADVANCE WORD" I'VE RECOUNTED TO YOU HERE-- THE FIRST WORD WE HAD WAS THE RADIO BROADCAST BY THE REGIME IN ADDIS. BUT OBVIOUSLY, OVER THE SUMMER IT HAS BEEN CLEAR THAT THERE WERE FORCES MOVING TO CHANGE THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA.

Q. JOHN, NOT SO LONG AGO, I THINK IT WAS IN AUGUST, YOU SAID THAT YOU RECEIVED A REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND YOU "RESPONDED FAVORABLY."

DOES THIS STILL STAND? THE RESPONSE IS FAVORABLE?

A. WELL --

Q. WHAT HAPPENED.
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A. IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, WHERE WE HAVE REALLY A DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIP, I CAN ONLY TELL YOU THAT THERE WILL BE NO NEW AGREEMENTS, AND THAT SORT OF THING, WHICH WILL BE SIGNED OR ENTERED INTO BY THE U.S. AND ETHIOPIA, UNTIL, YOU KNOW, WE DETERMINE THAT THE NEW REGIME IS IN CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY AND IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT ITS INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

BUT IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, THE PROGRAMS ON THE BOOKS -- BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, WILL CONTINUE.

Q. JOHN, HOW MUCH DOES THAT AMOUNT TO?

A. ON ECONOMIC AID, THE TOTAL FOR FISCAL '74 WHICH EXCLUDES DROUGHT ASSISTANCE, IS 19.7 MILLION DOLLARS, ROUGHLY.

Q. INCLUDES DROUGHT --

A. EXCLUDES. DROUGHT ASSISTANCE IS, FOR FISCAL '74, WAS 17.1 MILLION DOLLARS, WHICH BREAKS DOWN TO -- WHICH IS LARGELY FOOD-GRAIN ASSISTANCE -- BUT THERE WAS SOME NON-OH, ROUGHLY 2.4 MILLION DOLLARS IN NON-FOOD

EMERGENCY AID RELATED TO THE -- OUR EFFORTS TO ASSIST THEM IN THE DROUGHT.

ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE, FISCAL '74, THERE WAS 11.3 MILLION DOLLARS PROGRAM FOR GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

Q. FOR GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE?

A. YES.

AND 11 MILLION DOLLARS UNDER FOREIGN MILITARY SALES CREDIT --

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PLUS AN AGREEMENT TO ALLOW ETHIOPIA TO MAKE ADDITIONAL MILITARY PURCHASES FOR CASH.

NOW THIS, I THINK, IS WHAT YOU REFERRED TO AT THE OUTSET--

Q. YES.

A. -- AND AS I SAY, THIS IS A MATTER THAT HAS TO REMAIN UNDECIDED, RIGHT NOW.

Q. IT'S TO REMAIN UNDECIDED?

A. YES.

Q. THE RESPONSE WAS FAVORABLE, BUT NO AGREEMENT WAS REACHED?

A. THAT IS CORRECT.

Q. JOHN, HAVEN'T WE SET A LIMIT ON THE ADDITIONAL PURCHASES?

A. I DON'T REALLY KNOW.

Q. ALSO, WHAT TYPE OF CURRENCY?

A. THAT WOULD BE CONVERTIBLE CURRENCY. I DON'T KNOW
WHETHER IT WOULD BE DOLLARS, OR FRANCS, OR --

Q. WAS THERE AN AMOUNT INVOLVED IN THIS?

A. NO.

Q. THERE WAS NO AMOUNT.
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